

**KEEPING TERRORISTS OUT OF AMERICA
BY UNIFYING TERRORIST WATCH LISTS:
*Ten Requirements for an Effective
Terrorist Screening Center***

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Prepared by the Democratic Members of the
House Select Committee on Homeland Security
November 2003

Executive Summary

The U.S. Government's failure to integrate its multiple terrorist watch lists and make information on suspected terrorists readily available to government security officials and federal, state, and local law enforcement is a critical shortcoming in our homeland security structure.

Since the tragic events of September 11, 2001, the Bush Administration has promised to achieve this goal, but, as of the second anniversary of the attacks, had not taken any significant action to turn these promises into reality.

In September of this year, the Administration announced that it would open a new Terrorist Screening Center (TSC), located at the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), to oversee an integrated terrorist watch list and disseminate terrorist information to government and law enforcement officials on the front lines. The precise capabilities the TSC will have when it commences operations on December 1 remain unclear. It is highly likely, however, that the TSC will not be fully operational on December 1, because many critical policy questions and procedures necessary for TSC's effective use of a unified watch list are likely to still be unresolved.

Promptly and fully implementing a robust, agile, and comprehensive terrorist screening capability is critical to our national security. Any time that our government is not able to provide this basic national security function is a time when America is at greater risk than it should be from the threat of global terrorism.

Based on our study of this issue over the past year, the following list describes the basic capabilities that the TSC must have when it opens on December 1 in order to be considered fully operational and capable of providing genuine security to the United States. It is imperative that the Bush Administration explain which of the capabilities the TSC possesses – and which it does not possess – when the TSC first begins operations. For those capabilities it does not possess as of December 1, American citizens are entitled to a detailed and expedited timetable for the White House to deliver on its promise. Specifically, the Administration needs to explain the work that still remains to be done, to set a firm deadline for completing this work, and to provide the TSC with any staff and resources necessary to achieve these goals.

1. **Comprehensive.** The TSC's unified watch list system must include, in a searchable and integrated database, all information possessed by the United States Government, state and

local governments, and available foreign sources concerning individuals suspected of involvement in terrorist activities.

2. **Accurate.** As new information becomes available, it must be automatically, rapidly, and accurately incorporated into the TSC's unified database.
3. **Accessible.** The following groups must be able to request and receive information from the TSC's unified watch list database:
 - All federal intelligence personnel;
 - All federal officials who screen people at land, sea, and air ports of entry;
 - All federal, state and local law enforcement personnel;
 - All federal officials that screen visa applications;
 - Authorized private-sector operators of critical infrastructure or organizers of large events;
 - Certain foreign governments that have entered into immigration agreements with the United States or that are engaged in the global war on terrorism as partners with the United States.
4. **Timely.** Authorized officials must be able to receive accurate results in sufficient time to take any required action.
5. **Tailored.** TSC personnel and systems must be able to provide varying levels of information, so that the amount and type of information shared is appropriate to the party making the request.
6. **Secure.** Privacy must be protected by guaranteeing that individuals requesting information from the TSC are authorized to do so, and only obtain and use the information in a lawful manner.
7. **Controlled.** Clear rules must govern who gets placed on the unified terrorist watch list, and which federal officials can make changes to the watch list database.
8. **Correctable.** Clear procedures must be in place for removing individuals erroneously placed on the unified terrorist watch list.
9. **Flexible.** The TSC's unified watch list system must be able to identify suspected terrorists who utilize known aliases or whose names have multiple spellings.
10. **Supported.** The TSC must have a trained workforce, adequate facilities and information technology, and stable and sufficient funding.

The opening of the TSC on December 1 is the beginning, not the end, of the U.S. Government's effort to provide a robust, unified terrorist watch list that truly enhances our national security. The Democrats on the Select Committee on Homeland Security will provide rigorous oversight to ensure that the Terrorist Screening Center is a powerful tool in the war against terror.